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IS PUBLIC TASTE LESS MORBID?

Although the presiding judge has been forced to protest against the presence in the court room of a large number of school girls, the trial of Harry New, Jr., in Los Angeles, is not attracting as much attention as the unusual character of the murder might have led students of the public mind to anticipate. In comparison with the Thaw or Beattie trials, the proceedings against New are given negligible space in the press reports.

This may be due in part to the fact that the reading public has been taught since 1914 to take interest in news of real importance—has been blessed, in short, with better perspective. But it is not too much to hope that the public taste is being weaned from that love of the morbid which was for generations a disgraceful peculiarity of the race. Until public executions were abolished in England, a hanging on Tyburn Hill was the occasion of a general holiday in London. When Jack Sheppard the noted highwayman, was put to death in 1724, some 300,000 people fought for points of vantage near the gallows. Still earlier, as Samuel Pepys records the execution of one Turner was a matter of such interest that half London journeyed to the place of death. Pepys himself paid a shilling to stand on a cart-wheel and bitterly complained that he had to wait an hour and a half while Turner delivered an interminable oration. It was considered no disgrace for a man of culture or of prominence to attend a hanging, on

the contrary, the courtier who missed one lost the opportunity of drawing an audience later to hear just how it happened. George Selwyn, who figures prominently in Thackeray's Four Georges, was perhaps the most notorious lover of the morbid in the history of an age by no means squeamish. Selwyn's tastes were so well known that friends on the bench always notified him of executions to take place on their circuits and promised him a "good seat" if he could attend. On one occasion Selwyn made a special trip to Paris to observe the tortures to be inflicted on a notorious criminal and took such evident satisfaction in the workmanlike methods of the French executioner that a man next to Selwyn in the crowd asked if he were not himself a headsmen. "No," said Selwyn, with a sigh, "I am only a poor amateur." When Lord Lovat was beheaded, Selwyn could not resist the temptation to see the old Jacobite taken off. And when some of his friends protested, that it was in the circumstances, an unseemly thing to do, Selwyn at once replied that to avoid doing any dishonor to a brave man, he had promptly gone to the undertaker's and had seen Lovat's head sewn back on for interment.

The days of such wretched taste are not as distant as some may be disposed to think. Even here in Richmond, hangings—"carnivals of death," as the lurid newspaper accounts of the day styled them—drew crowds until executions were closed to the public. On August 17, 1827, three Spaniards from the brig Crawl-

ford were hanged in Richmond for piracy on the high seas. They were dressed in purple gowns, with ropes about their necks, were taken from the Henrico jail, seated on their coffins in an open wagon and were driven up Main street, to a gallows reared near Belvidere and Canal streets, in rear of the penitentiary. The ropes about the necks of two of the men broke and made necessary a second hanging. The bodies were allowed to swing for an hour and when cut down, were carried to the state armory where medical men experimented with an electric current to see if the victims could be resuscitated. The whole proceedings were watched by thousands and formed a topic of conversation for a generation. Much the same thing happened, though with less spectacular detail, when one W. D. Totty, killed his sister-in-law at Grace and Monroe streets was condemned to death. For thirty years men and women used to tell how Totty sprang from his coffin on the wagon and ran up the steps to the gallows. For 20 minutes he was left hanging that all who would might see. The number present again ran into thousands. On May, 29, 1867, the hanging of a negro named Albert Taylor was courteously staged in the valley back of the almshouse so that all interested persons might range themselves in sight. When the procession finally arrived, after a long march through the city, nearly 5,000 people were in the valley or on the hills. Perhaps there are people in Richmond today who remember the long rambling speech the negro delivered

as he stood on the side of his spiritual adviser, John Jasper. This was the last public execution in Richmond. On July 22, 1870, when Peter Phillips was sent to his death, the gallows on which Turner had been hanged were erected again in the jail yard. There was much indignation at the time, on the part of a certain element, that so notorious a case should have ended with an execution that only those who climbed to housetops could see.

This reads very strangely today, when the suggestion of a public execution would arouse thousands in outraged protest. But those who saw a photograph of the lynching at Omaha on September 29 may remember that in the very front rank of the mob stood a well-dressed young man, smiling at the torture inflicted on a burning wretch. Verily the beast slumbers in the heart of millions! How easily it is aroused to rage!

Richmond News-Leader.

BANK ROBBERS ESCAPE WITH \$15,000 CASH FROM COLUMBUS SUBURB

Columbus, Ga., Jan. 17.—Four highway men at 1 o'clock this afternoon held up President C. L. Mullin and four employees of the Phoenix-Girard bank, of Girard, Ala., and departed with \$15,000 in currency. They are bound toward Montgomery, with a posse of Columbus police and others in pursuit.

Miss Maude Booth, employe, ward off a blow of a pistol as it came down on President Mullin's head and

received slight bruises.

The gang left out the Crawford road in the direction of Montgomery at a high rate of speed, in a Chalmers car. Not only did they take the automobile of a depositor who was at the bank, but all of his deposit before he had gotten it into the bank. City and county authorities were at once notified and a large posse in cars was on the trail in about thirty minutes after the highwaymen got away.

Telephone messages ahead located the car passing a store five miles out, it being estimated it was running forty miles an hour. Hope of the officers lies in some accident happening to the car, the roads being bad in that section.

PREMIER LOSES

BY CLOSE VOTE

Paris, Jan. 16.—Premier Georges Clemenceau went down to defeat at the hands of the countrymen today in a caucus of the senate and chamber of deputies to choose a candidate for the presidency of the republic. M. Clemenceau thereupon announced his withdrawal and his support of President Poincare. Senators and deputies, after the caucus in which Paul Deschanel, president of the chamber, led the premier by 19 votes, generally expressed the opinion that the vote means the elimination from public life of "the father of victory," Premier Clemenceau being neither a senator nor a deputy.

M. Clemenceau's friends are already searching for another candidate as President Poincare is reported to have refused to accede to the demand of a deputation of senators and deputies that he become a candidate for reelection. He is said to have renewed emphatically the expression of his determination not to be a candidate.

FORMER ABBEVILLE MAN IN NORTH CAROLINA

A clipping from a Greenville, N. C., paper tells of the business transactions of a former Abbeville man, T. T. Hollingsworth, who was also a student at Erskine and for a while a resident of Due West. He has many friends in the county who will be interested in the following:

Greenville, N. C., Jan. 10.—No business deal of wider interest has taken place in Greenville this year than that by which J. O. and W. E. Proctor of Grimesland, patred with the Proctor Hotel to E. C. Flanagan, of this city. The deal involved about \$100,000. It is the announced purpose of Mr. Flanagan to add at once 40 new rooms in the hotel. T. T. Hollingsworth is in charge of the Proctor Hotel and there is not a more popular hotel man along the Norfolk-Southern than he. The Princeton owned by Mr. Hollingsworth is also under his control. It is used for roomers only.

It is imperative that the hotel facilities of the city be increased. Adding 40 rooms will help, but even then all the folks who want to come to Greenville can't find lodging places.

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E. H. Longshore,
Agent.

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